

Serial No.: 10/692,947
Atty. Docket No.: D5380

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application as amended is requested. Claims 1, 2, 6, 10 and 11 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b). Claims 3-5 and 7-9 were rejected as obvious under 35 USC 103(a). Claim 1 has been further amended and claim 6 amended to overcome the prior art. Claim 11 has been cancelled to expedite prosecution of the application. Claims 1-10 remain active.

The anticipation rejection of claims 1, 2, 6, 10 and 11 was based on Heard, US-Pat 6,899,374. The Heard '374 patent, teaches a rear quarter panel 2 for a motor vehicle which is adapted to slide back and forth on tracks parallel to the motor vehicle's chassis to provide left and right side back doors into the vehicle passenger compartment. The quarter panels extend, when in their forward most position, from the rear of the vehicle to the trailing edge of the front door, and upwardly from a lower panel to the vehicle roof. With the quarter panel slid toward the back of the vehicle access is obtained to the rear seat located in the vehicle cab and thus the panel doubles as a hidden door. A vehicle incorporating the system is a four door car that has the appearance of a two door coupe. The sliding door, because it takes in the entire rear quarter panel, must accommodate intrusion of the wheel well (See Fig. 2).

Claims 1 and 6 have been amended to further distinguish the present invention, which is directed not to providing access to a vehicle passenger compartment, but to a skirt panel system retaining ease of access to components hung from a chassis frame rail while hiding those components from view when access is not required. The claims as amended now recite mounting systems which place the skirt panels at least partially outwardly spaced from the frame rails of the vehicle as well as being movable. Because components such as batteries are frequently hung to the outside of the chassis, room must be provided between the skirt panels and the chassis for the batteries. The term "outward" can be taken as meaning away from the longitudinal

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centerline of the vehicle.

Claim 1 as amended provides:

a skirt panel mounting frame mounted outwardly with respect to a frame rail of the motor vehicle chassis with the skirt panel being supported by the skirt panel mounting frame to an outward side and *spaced at least partially outwardly away from the frame rail* to allow enclosure of vehicle components hung from the frame rail;(emphasis supplied)

as amended, the claim clearly positions the skirt panel differently than the door shown by Heard is positioned.

Similarly claim 6 as amended provides:

lower body panels mounted outwardly with respect to the right and left side frame rails to cover portions of the frame rails

the body panels including

[an aft movable panel which has a]. . . forward position directly aft of the front section panel which allows space for a battery box

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CONCLUSION

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is not considered pertinent to Applicant's disclosure.

Applicant believes the Claims as amended are in condition for allowance and respectfully requests favorable action by the Examiner.

Respectfully submitted,



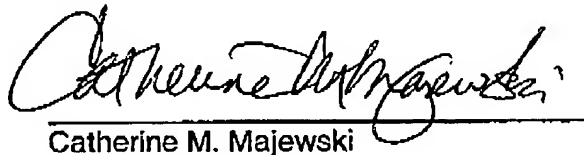
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CERTIFICATE OF TRANSMISSION UNDER 37 CFR §1.8

I hereby certify that this **AMENDMENT AFTER FINAL** is being facsimile transmitted to the Patent and Trademark Office on or before 7/17/06 to (571) 273-8300.

Date: 7/17/06



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